

HAS TITO'S REGIME GONE DEMOCRATIC?

A First-hand Observer Appraises the Changes

MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM

EVERY day thousands of Belgrade's citizens file through the offices of the United States Information Service to get copies of the Serbo-Croat edition of its news bulletins. The only patrons of the more impressive House of Soviet Culture are the satellite diplomats, foregathering there to see the latest movies from Moscow. Rumor has it that this decline from its previous bustling activity has something to do with the presence in a building across the street of Yugoslav secret police. But even without that deterrent, the demand for Soviet "culture" in Belgrade would not be very great. For the one most obvious thing about Yugoslavia today is the general conviction that Yugoslavia is well rid of her one-time Moscow friends.

FOR many Yugoslav Communists the break with Moscow did not come easily. The extent to which they had identified themselves with the international Communist

ONLY a few short years ago (in 1946, to be exact) Tito was shooting down American planes and outshouting all the Soviet satellites in his denunciation of "Anglo-American imperialism." Then came the break with Stalin in 1948 and Yugoslavia's running jump over the Iron Curtain. Today Tito is the recipient of American aid, pays state visits to Great Britain, and denounces not Washington but the Kremlin. To match this about-face in foreign policy, there have been attempts at what seems to be a mitigation of the harshly totalitarian features of Tito's regime. MAURICE J. GOLDBLOOM, a seasoned political observer who visited Yugoslavia last December, reports here what specific reforms have been instituted, and offers some appraisal of the changes in the political temper of the regime. Mr. Goldbloom is a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, his most recent appearance being with "Stalin's Trojan Horse Against America" (November 1952). We plan further appraisals of Tito's Yugoslavia, in view of the deep importance of this development in relation to defense and Soviet policy in the cold war.

movement was clearly indicated by the selection of Belgrade as the Cominform's first headquarters. Even when the rupture between Stalin and Tito came out into the open in 1948, the Yugoslavs loudly protested their devotion to the Cominform, and complained that they were being unjustly cast out.* But Tito and his advisers soon found that the break, forced upon them by Soviet intransigence, was immensely popular in the country, where resentment against Russian domination and exploitation had been gathering for some time.

At first the Yugoslav leaders tried to restrict their conflict with Stalin to the smallest possible compass: they emphasized that it would produce no change in their domestic policies, and they even tried to hold on to the same foreign policy as before.

It soon became clear, however, that there was no place in the Soviet orbit for heretics—and that a heretical Yugoslavia needed friends. Still fearing and distrusting the West, Yugoslavia nevertheless put out feelers in that direction. Reciprocating Yugoslav distrust, but recognizing the tremendous change in European power relations that Yugoslavia's shift had created, the Western powers also sought a rapprochement. The public seal was set on the new alignment, nonetheless real and irrevocable for its informality and reservations, when in October 1949 Yugoslavia, supported by the West, was elected to the United Nations Security Council over Soviet opposition.

From this point on, things developed rapidly. What had been a furtive flirtation became an open betrothal. To be sure, both sides continued to emphasize that the marriage was one not of love but of convenience.

*Tito ended the Yugoslav Communist party congress that defied the Cominform with the words, "Long live the Soviet Union, long live Stalin!" An interesting account of the events before and after the break is to be found in Vladimir Dedijer's *Tito* (Simon and Schuster, 443 pp., \$5.00).

But the convenience for both parties was very clear. Britain and the United States at once set about improving relations between Yugoslavia and Greece, disrupted by Yugoslav support of the Greek Communist guerrillas. (The withdrawal of this support early in 1949, following the Greek Communists' siding with Stalin against Tito, speedily brought about the collapse of the Greek revolt.) Indeed, Anglo-American intervention in favor of the Center in the Greek cabinet crisis that followed the elections of March 1950 had as one of its aims the setting up of a Greek government with which Tito could deal without having to eat too many of his denunciations of "monarcho-fascist" Greece. It is a measure of the distance both sides have moved since then that the rapprochement between Yugoslavia and Greece, slowly and painfully initiated at that time by the Center government of General Nicholas Plastiras, has now blossomed into a detailed if partly unwritten military alliance. The one fly that still remains in the ointment of Yugoslav relations with the West is Yugoslavia's dispute with Italy over the Trieste area—a dispute that goes back to the Versailles Treaty.

THERE can be no doubt, then, that Yugoslavia is today part of the alliance which stands guard against Soviet aggression in Europe. Nor, from a strictly military point of view, can there be much doubt that the alliance is a valuable and even essential one for the West as well as for Yugoslavia. But, the question then forces itself on us, are we merely making an opportunistic if necessary pact with the less dangerous of two equally totalitarian dictatorships against the more dangerous? This was the original opinion of most Americans, including myself.

Even if this opinion were still warranted, a policy of cooperation with Yugoslavia against Russia would be justified. Of course, it would be neither necessary nor desirable to picture Tito as a knight in shining armor; we are paying heavily today for having fooled ourselves about our Russian ally in the fight against Hitler. But it would be equally foolish, if the Yugoslav regime is now substantially different from the Soviet, for us to pretend that it is not. And, in fact, however alike the two regimes may have been in 1948, they are today very different.

The Yugoslav defection, like most of the splits in the international Communist movement, started over a question of power rather than principle. But such splits have a dynamic of their own. Having parted ways with Moscow, the Yugoslav leaders found themselves necessarily led into a critique of the principles of Soviet practice. It was not enough, for people to whom it was an article of faith that correct action must follow from sound doctrine, to condemn Stalin's acts; they also had to trace these wrong acts back to doctrinal origins.

The leaders of the Yugoslav Communist party were naturally hesitant to revise a faith which they had accepted implicitly and which had provided the basis of their own power. But not to do so would have been to admit that Stalin had to be right and to assent in advance to their own destruction. They had to demonstrate not only to others, but above all to themselves, that their way was not Stalin's. This inner need has been, I think, the strongest motive in the many changes that have taken place in the theory and practice of Yugoslav Communism since the break with Moscow. In this situation, the influence of the West—not through pressure, but simply through contact and example—has tended to pull Yugoslavia away from totalitarianism. So too has the will of the great mass of the people; just as they welcomed the break with Moscow, so they have welcomed the growing flexibility of the regime. And this in turn has encouraged the government to introduce further changes.

ONE of the first things a visitor to Yugoslavia notices is the freedom with which people speak. Usually they speak critically. I spoke to dozens of ordinary, non-party Yugoslavs in trains, in the streets, in stores, and I do not think there was one who did not voice some criticism of the state of affairs. Nor was there one who did not tell me how much better things were today than two years ago.

This does not mean that there is anything like full freedom of speech in Yugoslavia, or that the secret police has disappeared. (Still less that its head, Alexander Rankovich, was strictly accurate when he wrote recently that his organization had won the love of the broad masses!) Many

political prisoners still sit in jail in Yugoslavia. But there have been no political executions in years, and most of the political arrests in the past two years have been of persons accused, at least nominally, of Stalinist conspiracy or espionage. Yet a few people who have no connection at all with Stalinism are still being arrested for political reasons. When I was in Belgrade I heard of the case of an engineer who had criticized the government freely to some French journalists; he had already spent a few months in jail, and hadn't been brought to trial yet. Subsequently I learned that he had been sentenced to five years in prison on the charge of having given documents to a Russian UNRRA official in 1946!

Pre-war political leaders who were sentenced to prison terms in the first postwar days are being released as their terms expire. Lazar Markovich, for example, a pre-war Minister of Justice and leading member of the conservative Radical party (the dominant party during most of the parliamentary period preceding the dictatorship of King Alexander), was released in 1951. The Serb Agrarian leader Dragoljub Jovanovich, imprisoned after resigning from the first postwar government, remains in prison. Vice-Premier Moshe Pijade told me: "As far as I know our people haven't discussed releasing him at present." But he will undoubtedly be released at the expiration of his sentence in about a year.

THE relative freedom of speech that the man in the street enjoys is of course not to be found in the media of mass communication. It would be absurd to say that the Yugoslav press is today "free" in any meaningful sense. Editors, it is true, have a certain latitude of comment, and controversies take place in the pages of *Borba* and other Yugoslav publications. But all such independence is narrowly circumscribed. Even though there is no pre-censorship, a wise editor refers any "doubtful" matter to "Agit-prop" before printing it. When Archbishop Stepinac was made a cardinal, Yugoslav papers printed nothing on the subject for two days—it took that long to receive the official directive on the handling of the matter. My questions about press freedom, as well as about the possibility of opposition parties, led Pijade to tell me: "You suffer from the

same sickness all Westerners do; you cannot conceive of any form of democracy but your own."

One partial corrective to Yugoslavia's controlled press—a very inadequate but nonetheless important one—might be the free circulation of foreign publications. Such publications are available today, but in very limited quantities. In Belgrade I was able to find no foreign newspapers on sale; there were, however, a few foreign magazines to be had, including *Time*. In the Croatian capital, Zagreb, and the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, a few copies of two Austrian newspapers were on sale, as well as one Italian-language paper from Trieste. Individuals may subscribe to foreign publications, and some do. But the total number of copies imported is very small, consisting largely of technical publications. Pijade blamed this on the difficulty of finding foreign exchange for the importation of foreign publications and the high cost of such publications in terms of a Yugoslav income. He himself, he told me, could not afford to renew his subscription to the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*. Yugoslavia is short of foreign exchange and one can't afford many foreign publications on an average monthly wage of 7,500 dinars (\$25 at the official rate of exchange), or even on the \$70 or so earned by top executives. But the foreign exchange situation is no worse in Belgrade than in Zagreb or Ljubljana, and all the German-language newspapers imported into those cities are snapped up in a few hours.

AS THINGS stand, the principal sources of foreign printed matter are the British and American information services. Both publish mimeographed bulletins, in English and Serbo-Croat, summarizing radio news received by the embassies, and both are eagerly sought by thousands of Yugoslavs. The United States Embassy also gives away to key individuals and institutions some hundreds of subscriptions to the *Paris Herald Tribune* and the overseas edition of the *New York Times*. The demand for these considerably exceeds the supply. And both information services have libraries in which more or less current publications are available. In the American Library of Information in Belgrade, the *Times* and *Paris Herald Tribune* are the only newspapers available, each in a

single copy and seldom less than ten days old. Their datedness may or may not help to explain why nine-tenths of the people I saw in the library were reading such publications as *Harper's Bazaar*.

The Yugoslav radio is even less likely than the press to be caught expressing unofficial opinions in the foreseeable future. In this case, however, it couldn't be otherwise. Yugoslavia's radio stations are heard in neighboring countries and must remain as much an instrument of Yugoslav national policy as the Voice of America is of our own. Still, almost all of the approximately 350,000 radio sets in Yugoslavia are capable of receiving foreign stations, and most Yugoslavs with a radio listen to them.

If the Yugoslav reader is not given much variety of opinion in his newspapers, he does have some in the books he can buy. Most of the stock in Yugoslav bookstores and probably most of the individual titles are translations of foreign works. Some of these are classics, which appear to form a somewhat higher percentage of the reading matter on display in Yugoslav bookstores than in those of New York. But contemporary Western works are well represented, and the selection is varied both in literary and ideological terms. Not only are novels—ranging from Silone and Faulkner to *Gone with the Wind*—available to the Yugoslav reader, but also political and philosophical books by such authors as Sartre and Camus can be had in Serbo-Croat translations.

Obviously, this variety of intellectual fare offered to the Yugoslav citizen must to some extent reflect the policy of the government. Whatever the technical organization of the publishing industry, a central government intent on enforcing strict orthodoxy would see to it that its wishes were observed. But granted a willingness on the part of the Yugoslav leaders to permit some controversial opinions to be expressed in print, the practical realization of this is made much easier by the fact that there are numerous publishing firms, formally autonomous, and actually subject to local rather than central political supervision.

POLITICAL decentralization and economic self-administration are the twin pillars of Yugoslav political theory today. Both policies are directed against the growth of a

centralized bureaucracy, in which Yugoslav leaders see the basic cause of all the Soviet Union's faults. At least formally, political decentralization has gone more slowly than economic self-administration. Yugoslav writers tend to be so effusive about the advantages of decentralization that they seem to have already been secured. But most of the measures of decentralization are in fact too recent to have had any significant effect as yet. Prime Minister Vladimir Bakarich of Croatia, himself one of the most active advocates of the new policy, told me that decentralization had so far had little practical effect, although he believes its potential importance is very great. Bakarich, however, may find it politic to underestimate the actual differences which have already developed between Serbia and Croatia in the application of nominally identical policies. My own observations and those of others, both Yugoslavs and informed foreigners, indicate that Croatia under Bakarich has in a number of fields gone considerably further in liberalization than have the other constituent republics of Yugoslavia. Thus, private enterprise theoretically doesn't exist in Yugoslavia except for self-employed artisans selling their own services or products, and producers' cooperatives. In fact, however, the regulations governing this matter are interpreted much more liberally in Croatia than in the other republics, with the result that certain types of private business which are non-existent elsewhere in the country can be found in Croatia.

Or consider the matter of the uneconomic collective farms. (That is, collectives where the land is such that there is no significant gain in efficiency to be got from the mechanization which large-scale farming makes possible.) These have been allowed, as a matter of policy, to dissolve in all parts of Yugoslavia.* The administrative application of this policy, however, was affected by the differing outlooks of the leaders in the vari-

*Only 24 per cent of Yugoslavia's agricultural land was included in collectives at the height of the collectivization drive. By December 1952 this had fallen to 19 per cent, and the government has now announced that collectivization will henceforth be on a purely voluntary basis. In addition most collectives now pay their members partly on a basis of the land and livestock they contributed to the common stock.

ous republics—with Bakarich again reportedly going furthest in the direction of liberalization. Apparently administrative decentralization had already led to regional differences in practice even at a time when policy was still supposed to be uniform. Now, however, the new constitution, by placing most of the authority over domestic political affairs in the hands of the constituent republics rather than the central government, allows policy differences as well.

There are real differences of background and interest among the various parts of the country—indeed, very great ones—and these are reflected within the Yugoslav Communist movement itself. Pre-war Yugoslavia was never, in fact, a truly unified state. Its nucleus, the Kingdom of Serbia, was under Turkish rule until the early 19th century. Montenegro preserved its mountain independence in virtual isolation, from the Middle Ages down to 1918. Macedonia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina were ruled by the Turks down into our own century, lagging far behind Serbia culturally and economically. On the other hand, the parts of Yugoslavia that had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire—Croatia and Slovenia, Dalmatia and the Voivodina—were the richest and most advanced of all. There, average income was far greater than in poorer areas.

THESE differences kept Yugoslavia from becoming a united country in the period between the wars. The resistance of Croatia to Serb hegemony is well known; but Croatia was not the only area of discontent. I remember how, at an institute held by the British Council in Maribor in the summer of 1939, one of the instructors introduced a couple of students as coming from South Serbia, and they protested vehemently, "We are *not* from Serbia, we are from Macedonia!" Tito's government, like the pre-war governments of Yugoslavia, has been faced with the problem of welding peoples on widely varying economic levels and with diverse histories and cultural characteristics into a single nation—the problem, as a leading Yugoslav Communist said to me, "of making one nation out of Austrians and Turks." (He added: "It can be done only by industrialization and the socialist idea.")

In order to make real unification pos-

sible, the Yugoslav government is trying to raise the economic and cultural level of the more backward parts of the country. It has established new industries in such areas as Macedonia and Montenegro, when a greater total production would have been gained by making the investments in Slovenia or Croatia. Under rationing, the same standards were set for all parts of the country regardless of previous consumption levels, with the result that the average person in the poorer areas gets more to eat than before. But the improvement of the standard of living in the poorer parts of the country has necessarily been at the expense of the richer sections; these have had to decrease their consumption not only to make up for the increases elsewhere, but also to supply the capital for the country's program of industrial development. This has naturally not increased the popularity of the regime in such areas as Croatia, Slovenia, and Voivodina. Nevertheless, there is no disagreement among Yugoslav leaders as to the necessity of continuing this subsidization; it is the only possible way to create genuine national unity in the long run. But there appears to be considerable disagreement over its pace, with Croatian and Slovenian leaders on one side of the argument, and those from the backward areas on the other.

Linked up with this, also, is the problem of the rate of industrial development. For to divert productive capacity from capital goods to consumer goods would make it possible to raise the standard of living of the poorer areas without depressing those of the wealthier ones. Such a shift is actually scheduled to take place in the current year. (When I asked three leading Yugoslav Communists whether a shift to consumer goods was in prospect, all answered in the affirmative, but their explanations differed. Moshe Pijade said: "We can do this now because our basic industrial program is practically completed." Croatian Premier Bakarich said there had been, in the past, a tendency to overemphasize heavy industry as a result of mistakenly copying the Russians. And a member of the Slovene Communist executive committee declared: "We can do this now because we are part of the Western democratic front, and therefore do not need to rely on ourselves so exclusively for these things." All three explanations have a con-

siderable measure of truth in them; the latter two are, I think, more important than Pijade's.) The influence of Croatian and Slovenian leaders in the Yugoslav government appears to be increasing; one of its results is likely to be a decrease in the exploitation of these areas for the benefit of their neighbors in southern and eastern Yugoslavia. Of course, increased military demands or an economic breakdown could undermine the standard of living and cause serious political repercussions. But the current year's military budget shows a reduction, attributed to increased efficiency rather than decreased strength; it is also due, at least in part, to the dissolution of the military arm of the secret police.

AT THE same time that Yugoslavia has been moving toward the decentralization of political power, she has been experimenting with economic self-administration and a free market. In theory, all business and industry (with the exceptions previously mentioned) are owned by the state. But each enterprise is administered by the workers in it, through their workers' council, and competes freely on the market. If it makes a profit, this is available for the workers' use, whether for wage increases or for such social purposes as workers' housing. Workers in an efficient enterprise can enjoy the benefits of its efficiency; an inefficient one, on the other hand, will lose money, be forced to reduce expenses by cutting wages, laying off workers, or otherwise retrenching, and in case of continued losses go bankrupt.

Central coordination is effected through control of credit, since no enterprise possesses any capital of its own. All operate exclusively with funds supplied by the National Bank. This is today the only bank in Yugoslavia, but Bakarich told me he thought additional banks should be established. Each firm contributes a percentage of all the wages it pays out to an "accumulation fund" that goes to the central government. The accumulation fund represents rent, taxes, and return on capital investment; from another point of view, it represents the total charges on the enterprise for all purposes other than direct labor and raw material costs. The accumulation rate is set for each individual enterprise by the National Bank. The average for all industry is about 450 per cent;

that is, for every dollar paid out in wages, \$4.50 goes into the accumulation fund. Its control of credit permits the National Bank to determine which enterprises should expand, and in a general way how the resources of the country should be used.* By varying the accumulation rate, it is able to recapture for the state the benefits of higher production resulting from technologically superior plants, and of higher profits resulting from the monopolistic position of particular enterprises. At the same time, a plant can, by increasing its efficiency, increase the amount it has available for distribution to its workers—though the state receives a major share of the benefit, since as wages rise, so does the accumulation fund.

This is the theory of Yugoslav economic decentralization. In a large measure it corresponds to the facts, but it also has a quality of make-believe in many respects. The free market has meaning in terms of goods sold to the ordinary consumer—the same pound of margarine varies from 60 to 70 dinars in different Belgrade stores, and numerous devices of American merchandising, such as the clearance sale and the loss-leader, have been finding their way into Yugoslavia. Consumer choice among different articles is real, and the demand that an enterprise show a profit or go out of business is an effective instrument for eliminating economic waste. But Yugoslav heavy industry sells either directly to the government, or to other industries; neither in its purchase of raw materials, nor in its sale of its own products, is it dealing in a really free market. The value of its plant as expressed in Yugoslav currency is meaningless; the investment was made in it not only at times when the currency had different values, but also when prices were almost entirely artificially rigged. The pricing of its products must therefore remain arbitrary; it is doubtful if even the best system of cost-account-

*Yugoslavia has operated, up to now, on the basis of general plans laid down in advance for the entire economy. In practice, however, there has been an increasing flexibility in the execution of these plans, and Jack Raymond reports in the *New York Times* of February 18, 1953, that Svetozar Vukmanovich-Tempo, one of the top Yugoslav leaders, "disclosed that in the future Yugoslavia would not indulge in any rigid plans of economic development such as the five-year plan."

ing—which is no more developed in Yugoslavia than it is in most European countries—would make it possible at this point to determine real costs for heavy industry.

LIKEWISE, the rate of accumulation is arbitrarily set for each individual enterprise by the National Bank. Varying this rate enables the economic authority to equalize the differences in plant efficiency arising from differences in the quality of the equipment; it is also a useful device for regulating the amount of “profit” an enterprise can make, so as to prevent workers in a plant producing scarce goods, or having a monopoly position, from exploiting their advantage at the public’s cost. A low rate of accumulation can be used to subsidize a plant producing essential but relatively unprofitable goods, or perhaps help an industry established in a backward area to compete in the market with plants in more advanced parts of the country. But all these functions (like our own system of tariffs, subsidies, and tax concessions) are obviously incompatible with a genuinely free market.*

The general level of accumulation rates and the general level of prices are such as to exaggerate the relative importance of industrial goods in the Yugoslav national product and the relative contribution of industry to the national budget. The fact that in most cases the prices of industrial goods are well above world levels, whereas those of agricultural products are low by comparison with world prices, is not merely a reflection of greater agricultural efficiency. (The best Yugoslav plants are, in terms of man-hours per comparable unit of product, about three-fourths as efficient as the best German plants—which means that they are more efficient than most plants in Western Europe.) Rather, the disproportion is an instrument of national policy, not so much in the economic as in the political field, for the higher nominal value of industry’s contribution to the national income and national budget is

an important factor in both internal and external propaganda. Moreover, the overvaluing of industrial products guarantees that the “Producers’ Chamber” established under the new constitution, representation in which is to be based on the value of the product, will have a majority of industrial workers, although Yugoslavia is still a predominantly agricultural country.

DESPITE these marked limitations, economic decentralization in Yugoslavia has real meaning, and very considerable practical advantages. Articles for which there is a great demand are manufactured in preference to those which people are quite willing to do without, because satisfying the consumer is the way to increase the income of an enterprise. Competition tends to prevent the management and workers of a particular plant from holding up the general consumer; in the long run—and sometimes even in the short run—it brings down prices. (Indeed, Yugoslav officials have expressed fear that state-owned but autonomous enterprises may form cartels, and are studying ways to prevent this!)

Workers have a very real share in the management of the enterprises in which they work. We need not be surprised that in practice this is usually confined to modifying proposals originating with the management; but the workers can, and sometimes do, take the initiative. And the proposals made by management must inevitably be influenced by the knowledge that they will have to win the approval of the workers.

When there is a surplus—as there frequently is—in the wage fund, the workers themselves decide what to do with it. At a meeting I attended of the management committee of a shoe factory in Ljubljana, the workers’ council delegates and factory officials making up the committee voted to use the plant’s surplus to give a pair of shoes to every member of the family of every worker in the factory, and to pay all workers an extra month’s wages. I was also informed that when there had been a temporary lay-off because of raw material shortages, the surplus in the wage fund had been used to pay the idle workers their regular wages.

The workers in a plant also determine the division of the wage fund among the various categories of workers, i.e., the wage

*The government announced at the beginning of April that it planned to abolish the accumulation fund technique and replace it with a system of progressive income taxes, applied to profits rather than to gross income. Details of the new system are not yet available, but it will apparently represent a further step in the relaxation of central controls.

rates for the different occupations in the plant. This division must be approved by the trade union center of the area; in case of disagreement between the workers in the plant and the unions, it goes to arbitration. A trade union official told me that the trade unions had to fight against the tendency of the workers' councils to give too large a share of the wage fund to those in managerial and high clerical positions. But the actual difference between the 6,000 dinars a month received by an unskilled worker and the 22,000 received by the director of the largest factory in Yugoslavia is not very great—particularly when one takes into account the fact that each worker, whatever his base pay, receives 3,000 dinars a month extra for each child he has. The difference between this and the highly centralized system of the Soviet Union is obvious.

THE crucial issue in the question of the political future of Yugoslavia is that of the one-party state. There are as yet no public voices in Yugoslavia to suggest that opposition parties be permitted. The official Yugoslav goal is the replacement of the one-party state by a partyless socialism. Edvard Kardelj, one of the principal architects of present Yugoslav internal policy, writes:

Any honest man knows today that any party created here outside the People's Front would, regardless of its formal program, inescapably become the rallying point of all kinds of human scum, which would very soon turn such a party into an instrument in alien hands for combating the independence of our country. . . . The future free Socialist society will certainly require neither a state machine nor parties—either one or many, at least not in the sense in which we refer to them today. Now when we have such complex and difficult immediate problems to solve, when the enemy is trying to strangle us by fierce aggressive pressure, it is not our business to dream about the forms the struggle of ideas will take in such future free society. This is a task for future generations. But one task in this respect rests with us; that is, that with the state system we are building we should not impede but assist development in that direction. *In that respect the alternative between the Marxist premise [of] the withering away of the state—and with it of every party system—and the Stalinist theory [of] the strengthening of the state today constitutes the touchstone of true socialism.*

The official Yugoslav contention is that the measures of decentralization and functional autonomy which are being introduced mark a beginning in the "withering away of the state." In theory, too, the Communist party is also beginning to "wither away" as it ceases to direct and control. The decisions of the party congress in November 1952 to transfer many of the party's functions to the People's Front (to which almost all adult Yugoslavs belong) and to change the party's name to "Union of Communists" conform to this policy. In practice, it is rather difficult to tell whether the party's essential grip on the state is relaxing. The same people are, on the whole, state officials and party leaders. The recent party congress was the occasion of major policy declarations, some of which involved a diminution of the party's role; policy decisions of equal moment have been taken in the Yugoslav parliament. The fact is that in both cases these decisions were the result of discussion and argument among the same group of people who run both government and party, and reflect tendencies working inside and outside the party. It is interesting to note that Yugoslav leaders have been emphasizing that the People's Front, now renamed "Union of Socialists," should be a place where policies are actually discussed and decisions taken. In line with this, they have stated that it is not undesirable for Communists to disagree in public.

When I asked Bakarich whether decentralization could really be operative, since the Communist party remained centralized, he replied: "The party has no right to interfere in questions of local policy." What would happen, I continued, if Cominformists were to get control of the party and government in one of the constituent republics? "It would be up to the party in that republic to deal with the situation; the central government and party leadership could not interfere."

IT IS of course ridiculous to believe that this would actually happen; the Yugoslav leaders are the last people in the world to indulge in such quixotism. Yet there is no question that the party has been dissolving the functional units by which it exercised control in factories, trade unions, etc. Local elections, works council elections, trade un-

ion elections are today on a non-party and multi-candidate basis. By law, there must be at least twice as many candidates as there are offices to be filled. Nominations take place at meetings or by petitions requiring only a small number of signatures; lists generally appear to include Communists and non-Communists; there may be two or three competing slates. Voting is by secret ballot and tickets can be split. At the local level it would appear that more non-Communists than Communists are elected. It is interesting to note that in the local elections of December 1952, the results in a number of cases were thrown out and new elections held on the ground that the local authorities had interfered with the secrecy of the ballot. Pijade told me there is nothing to prevent candidates from running in these elections on a program critical of the government's methods; but he made it clear that no candidates would be permitted to raise the question of basic direction.

There have always been officials on all levels, including the cabinets of both the constituent republics and the central government, who had formerly been active in non-Communist parties and had never become Communists. Until recently, however, there was little reason to believe that their presence had any genuine political meaning. But this too may be changing. For in a recent meeting of the Yugoslav parliament, one of the non-Communist members tried to amend a bill amnestying peasants impris-

oned for failing to deliver their quotas (compulsory deliveries no longer exist), so as to return their confiscated land, and amnesty political prisoners in general. His amendments, although defeated, were hotly debated. And after their defeat he walked out of the parliament saying that he would vote neither for nor against the bill as it stood.

Yugoslavia still has a long way to go down the road from totalitarianism. Yet the direction of her development since the parting from Stalin has been steadily toward freedom. Moreover, the *values* in terms of which Yugoslav leaders think seem on the whole to be democratic, even where their practice is not. (One trade union leader emphasized to me the "constant struggle" that went on between unions and management; if this was an exaggeration, at least the pretense of disagreement implies a recognition of its desirability.) Every so often there have been statements indicating that the government felt people were taking their new freedom too seriously. But these statements have not been followed by any significant step backward in practice. Communist leaders do not pretend that they have as yet found all the answers: Bakarich repeatedly said, "Yes, I think that's wrong, and it will have to be changed."

But whatever the future may bring, one thing is certain: while still undeniably a dictatorship, Yugoslavia is today one of the few places in the world where people are significantly freer than two years ago.